



Using Electronic Pathology Reporting to Improve Case Ascertainment

Public Health Problem

Having complete and accurate cancer data is important to understanding the burden of cancer. Prior to collecting and analyzing cancer morbidity and mortality data for the year 2000, the Nevada Central Cancer Registry (NCCR) was unable to provide complete reporting of cancer cases. Consequently, Nevada did not meet the completeness standards required for certification by the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries (NAACCR).

Taking Action

NCCR believed it had captured all the cancer cases that were diagnosed or treated in an inpatient facility (e.g., hospital), but fell short in identifying cancer cases that were diagnosed or treated in an outpatient setting (e.g., doctors' offices, surgi-centers). In order to capture cancer cases in the outpatient setting, NCCR electronically processed more than 10,000 pathology reports and was able to identify more than 2,000 new cancer cases. NCCR increased reporting of prostate, breast, melanoma, and bladder cancers by 12.2 percent. These are forms of cancer that are typically diagnosed and treated in an outpatient setting. Of the 1,512 breast cancers reported, 22.6 percent were reported from "path only" (i.e., the case was identified from a pathology report and no other source) cases accounting for an 8.7 percent increase in overall breast cancer reporting. Of the 435 cases of malignant melanoma skin cancers reported, 46 percent were from "path only" cases, accounting for an 89 percent increase in overall malignant melanoma reporting. Of the 1,319 prostate cancers reported, 22.4 percent were reported from "path only" cases. This accounted for an 8.3 percent increase in overall prostate cancer reporting.

Implications and Impact

By electronically processing pathology reports, NCCR was able to achieve more than 95 percent complete case ascertainment for 2000 and 2001 data and thus achieved "Gold" Certification from NAACCR. In 1997, NAACCR instituted a program that annually reviews member registries for their ability to produce complete, accurate, and timely data. The registry certification program then recognizes those registries meeting the highest standards of data quality with Gold or Silver recognition certificates for each data year. This achievement allowed the State of Nevada to produce Cancer Report on Nevada, which included epidemiological analysis that statewide cancer prevention and intervention programs can use to target appropriate services. Moreover, Nevada is now included in United States Cancer Statistics, which is produced and disseminated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Finally, NCCR was recently recognized as "Outstanding Program of the Year" by the State of Nevada Health Division and the program manager was awarded "Outstanding Employee of the Year."

Contact Information

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